

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) An antimicrobial, tubular, single- or multilayer polymer-based plastics foodstuff casing having an inner and outer surface, wherein the casing comprises polyamide or polyamide layers and wherein the casing is premoistened so as to be ready-to-fill, which comprises, as antimicrobial constituent, an alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or a salt thereof, wherein the antimicrobial constituent is applied to the inner or to the inner and outer surface of the ~~casing and casing~~, wherein the polyamide casings or polyamide layers absorb up to about 6% by weight of water, and wherein the antimicrobial constituent is combined with a viscosity increasing component or an oil emulsion.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate or its salt contains from 1 to 10 carbon atoms in an alkyl moiety.

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt has been combined with at least one other antimicrobial agent.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 3, wherein the other antimicrobial agent is an agent which reduces water activity.

Claim 5. (Original) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 4, wherein the agent which reduces water activity is glycerol or propanediol.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inner side thereof is impregnated with at least one component which improves peelability.

Claim 7. (Original) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 6, wherein the component which improves peelability is a cellulose derivative or starch derivative, an alginate, or chitosan.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, which comprises premoistening the casing with an aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, based on the weight of the solution.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 8, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt is applied in one step with water serving for premoistening the inner and/or the outer side of the casing.

Claim 10. (Original) The process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the aqueous solution is applied by spraying.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 10, wherein the aqueous solution is applied with the aid of a spray mandrel to the inner side of the casing, while said casing is shirred.

Claim 12. (Original) The process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the aqueous solution comprises at least one component which makes the casing easy to peel.

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) A synthetic sausage-casing comprising a casing of claim 1.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) A casing of claim 2 having 1 to 6 carbon atoms in the alkyl moiety.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) A casing of claim 2 having 2 to 5 carbon atoms in the alkyl moiety.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 2, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt has been combined with at least one other antimicrobial agent.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented) A process of claim 8, wherein said antimicrobial agents are present in a proportion from 0.2 to 2% by weight based on the weight of the solution.

Claim 18. (Previously Presented) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 2, which comprises premoistening the casing with an aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, based on the weight of the solution.

Claim 19. (Previously Presented) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 3, which comprises premoistening the casing with an aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, based on the weight of the solution.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) A synthetic sausage-casing comprising a casing of claim 2.

Claim 21. (New) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the viscosity increasing component is either a polyhydric alcohol or a polyacrylic acid.

Claim 22. (New) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the oil emulsion is either a natural oil or a synthetic triglyceride.